



**TESTIMONY OF  
THE CONNECTICUT JUVENILE JUSTICE ALLIANCE  
FOR THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE  
MARCH 2, 2009**

*ABBY ANDERSON*

**Opposed to:**

**H.B. No. 6386 AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING  
THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION**

**S.B. No. 674 (COMM) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL EXPENDITURES  
RELATED TO THE CHANGE IN THE AGE OF JUVENILE COURT  
JURISDICTION**

**H.B. No. 6574 (RAISED) JUVENILE TRAINING SCHOOL AND OTHER JUVENILE  
DETENTION FACILITIES**

**In Favor of:**

**H.B. No. 6575 (RAISED) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO  
PROVISIONS RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION**

**Opposed to but see the value of as a compromise should it become necessary:**

**H.B. No. 6580 (RAISED) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE**

**Testimony**

**H.B. No. 6386 AN ACT DELAYING IMPLEMENTATION OF LEGISLATION RAISING THE AGE  
OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION**

**Alliance position: Opposed**

**Why:**

- Passed in 2007 and we've already had a 2 ½ year delay in implementation.
- Another youth killed himself in Manson in 2007; every year we wait we literally risk young people's lives. There have been no suicides in the juvenile justice system in the last 4 years.
- We know that youth tried in the adult system are more likely to reoffend more seriously and frequently than they would if they were treated in the juvenile system.
- Referrals to court are down and there are a significant number of juvenile justice beds in the state which are empty on a regular basis. Family With Service Needs referrals are down significantly over the past year – nearly 40%. New systems and programs are working to divert youth from escalating deeper into the system. There is room for the 16 and 17 year-olds to enter this system, working more effectively than ever. One key to this effectiveness is access to preventive services and programs like Family Support Centers, mandated to serve all 169 communities in the state but currently only serving 39. Funding the additional, mandated Family Support Centers is a critical part of the continuum as 16 and 17 year-old status offenders (now Youth in Crisis) will also be in the juvenile justice system when Connecticut implements changes to the age of juvenile court jurisdiction.
- We have empty beds in juvenile detention (more than 160 on February 26), CJTS and DCF residential facilities. We pay for these beds whether they are empty or full. Looking at this situation in light of the expensive overcrowding in the adult system, how do we NOT move the 16 and 17 year olds out of the adult system sooner rather than later?

**H.B. No. 6580 (RAISED) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING JUVENILE JUSTICE'**

**Alliance position: Opposed, but would favor this over a complete delay until 2012.**

**Why:**

- The State should stand by its promise and the Public Act 07-4 which ensured youth access to the juvenile justice system in 2010.
- If the position of the legislature is that full, on-time implementation is an impossibility – the Alliance concedes that this is a better compromise than waiting for full implementation in 2012.
- It is critically important to ensure a significant cadre of youth access to the juvenile justice system in 2010 as a sign of good faith by the State that it has every intention of making good on the promises made in Public Act 07-4.

**H.B. No. 6575 (RAISED) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING REVISIONS TO PROVISIONS RAISING THE AGE OF JUVENILE JURISDICTION**

**Alliance position: In Favor**

**Why:**

- This bill reflects the technical changes that have been discussed and approved by the JJPOCC as necessary for the effective and efficient treatment of 16 and 17 year olds in the juvenile justice system.
- These include keeping infractions and most motor vehicle infractions in the adult court and successfully addresses the concerns of police and local municipalities regarding unfunded mandates by allowing police to:  
1. Release youth on a promise to appear and 2. Question youth without parents presence after “making a reasonable effort” to contact those parents.

**S.B. No. 674 (COMM) JUDICIARY. AN ACT CONCERNING LOCAL EXPENDITURES RELATED TO THE CHANGE IN THE AGE OF JUVENILE COURT JURISDICTION'**

**Alliance position: Opposed**

**Why:**

- Concerns that raising the age constitutes an unfunded mandate are addressed by H.B. 6575.
- Would basically allow each town to use its own discretion as to whether they treated 16 and 17 year-olds as juveniles or adults, which would lead to disparate treatment of youth for the same crime in different cities; is unconstitutional and would set a dangerous precedent.

**H.B. No. 6574 (RAISED) JUVENILE TRAINING SCHOOL AND OTHER JUVENILE DETENTION FACILITIES**

**Alliance Position: Opposed**

**Why:**

- The bill calls for the legislative body of the local municipality to approve changes in the number of residents in a facility – not the capacity of the facilities. This would mean that if the Bridgeport detention center was holding 5 youth and the judge ordered another juvenile held in detention, the city council would have to vote first.
- The Alliance believes that out-of-home placement should be the last option for placement of youth and is opposed to large, warehouse-like facilities. However, small, group home facilities near a youth's community can be effective treatment options. This bill would make the placement of such facilities in different communities even more difficult than it is now.

In conclusion, Raise the Age offers **long-term, systemic financial savings**, and it is critical that Connecticut stay on track for implementation on January 1, 2010. The Alliance understands the road will be bumpy without ideal levels of funding; but that is not a reason to delay. The effectiveness of the FWSN and other reforms has created vacancies in the current system, offering an opportunity for **new efficiencies of scale with Raise the Age**. Now is not the time to stop. Raising the Age is good for the state's economy, for our communities, for public safety, and for our youth and their future. Thank you for your time.